44:Matthews and Akrawi S, G-3 (1945-1946)1949 MI Middle East
SYRIA MDI

Chapter 21

PUBLIC PRIMARY, SECONDARY, AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS

The Kindergarten

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KINDERGARTEN education in Syria is still in its infancy. In 1944–45 there were 267 children—all girls—in the *classes enfantines* in connection with girls primary schools. These were in 4 schools, thus making an average of 47 children in each school.

In 1945–46 the Ministry of Education opened 2 new kindergartens, in Damascus and Aleppo. Both were visited briefly by the American Council Commission. They take children usually from four to six years of age, although the one at Aleppo was accepting children of two and one-half years of age. The children are kept busy with toys, singing and dancing, games, drawing, and similar activities. Care was being taken to teach the children habits of cleanliness. Some Montessori material, or an imitation of it, was being used. Some rudiments of reading without formal class teaching are included in the program. Each of the kindergartens had one teacher trained in France. The others were trained as primary teachers in the Teachers College for Women at Damascus.

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Primary Education

Primary education is free in the public schools. It is also supposed to be compulsory, although this is more of a hope than a reality. The new education law, in setting down the principle of compulsion, provides that the principle may be applied in places decided upon by the Ministry of Education when adequate facilities exist. In his *Reports* Sati' al-Husri says that in drafting the new education law he was obliged to write the principle of compulsion into the law out of deference to the constitution which declares that primary education shall be compulsory. He knew, however, that the present number of schools is far from being adequate for requiring compulsory attendance in primary schools. Because the government budget will not be able to bear the expenses of compulsory primary schooling, he